#### **Area Plan Summary**

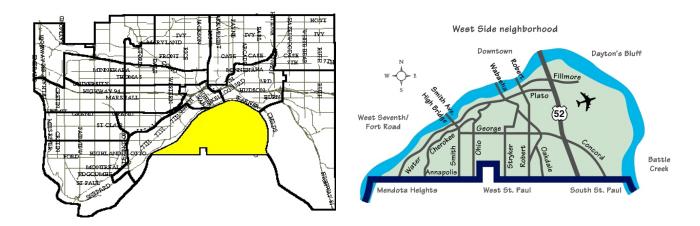
# West Side Community Plan and the Riverview Commercial Corridor Revitalization Program

# Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

Recommended by the Planning Commission (July 13, 2001) Adopted by the City Council (August 8, 2001)

This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the West Side Community Plan and the Riverview Commercial Corridor Revitalization Program (RCCRP). This summary replaces the District 3 Plan, adopted in 1981. The summary consists of five major areas of focus, including community identity, transportation and infrastructure, commercial corridor revitalization, housing, and public safety.

Copies of the full-length plans are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development, the West Side Citizens Organization, and the Riverview Economic Development Association.



#### **Location and Current Land Use**

The West Side is in a distinctive location south of downtown Saint Paul bounded by the Mississippi River and the City's southern boundary. The topography is punctuated by bluffs, terraces and flats or flood plains, and highlighted by parks and prominent structures. The neighborhood is characterized by two distinct land use patterns: on the flats there are large tracts of land currently devoted to industrial uses, the Downtown Airport, and Harriet Island Regional Park. On the blufftops and the terrace there is a finer-grained pattern of neighborhood uses ranging from turn-of-the-century single family homes to neighborhood businesses, schools, and parks.

#### Vision

The West Side's identity as a diverse, multi-cultural neighborhood will be celebrated and strengthened by maintaining the character and presence of the existing structures and a variety of housing opportunities, improving transportation infrastructure, expanding commercial activity, and promoting the environmental and recreational resources within the neighborhood. An enhanced transportation network with attractive streetscapes will improve options for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. The West Side, which is so defined by the river, will see that historic connection restored as the riverfront is redeveloped. Working together with the city, the West Side will ensure that new development will help restore natural resources, reflect the neighborhood's character, improve physical connections, enhance the vibrancy of the West Side and provide new job opportunities for its residents.

All riverfront developments will honor the long standing West Side principles of:

Accessibility--Riverfront development shall be consistent with a community vision of pedestrian corridors buffered from traffic, which invites residents to enjoy affordable activities on the riverfront in all seasons.

Connectedness--Riverfront development shall incorporate the character and culture of the West Side. Projects must provide a clear and definite connection with the aesthetics and spirit of the existing neighborhood. In addition, development should enhance transportation and relational linkages between the West Side and other riverfront communities.

Opportunity--Riverfront development shall provide job and business opportunities for West Side residents and community development opportunities for the neighborhood as a whole through such projects as incubators, youth development and educational activities, and the establishment of a community trust fund.

*Quality*--Riverfront development shall respect that the West Side is first and foremost a place where people live, thereby, protecting the residents' ability to peacefully enjoy their homes and neighborhood.

**District del Sol**, which roughly encompasses Concord Street between Wabasha and Ada Streets, and Robert Street between Concord and Wood Streets, will be a key commercial redevelopment corridor. Redevelopment will create a unified identity for the District del Sol, building upon its ethnic character to create a unique place and experience in Saint Paul. District del Sol will have established gateways, with engaged open space that enhances commercial opportunities, creating additional opportunities for "24-hour activities," while increasing parking options in the area.

## **Design Guidelines**

The Riverview Commercial Corridor Revitalization Plan includes a series of design guidelines for commercial development. These guidelines provide direction for redevelopment, storefront design, new construction, and streetscape and landscape design. The design guidelines emphasize the importance of carefully-sited buildings, improved façades, and streetscapes that create the traditional feel of sidewalks and roadways as public spaces. Public and private

developers are encouraged to work with Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and conform to these guidelines. It should be noted that office or housing units above street level retail is desired throughout District del Sol.

For redevelopment, when necessary, demolition should be allowed for new construction after the site has been reviewed and alternatives considered. Infill development is encouraged to create a continuous streetfront. Shared use and infill surface parking with esthetic screening should be developed throughout the commercial areas. Increased density is encouraged to create a critical mass of uses and to convey a sense of vitality. In general, a mix of use is preferable to single uses. Commercial buildings should be connected with and open onto outdoor public spaces to create a sense of ownership and security.

#### **Strategies and Recommendations**

# Community Identity

West Siders enjoy a strong sense of community due to a diverse population and a strong commitment to its history and the natural environment. Appropriate measures should be taken to protect the neighborhood's existing diversity and to foster the West Side's traditional role as a first port of entry for emerging immigrant groups. Future development should be sensitive to the unique character and natural features of the neighborhood. Efforts to connect the existing park system and protect the river bluffs are priorities. Heavy industrial uses should not be introduced to the area, and existing polluters should be gradually removed through redevelopment. Zoning changes should reflect the vision of the district and the comprehensive plan, as well as to create consistency from the river through District del Sol.

The natural environment is one of the most striking features of the neighborhood, with the Mississippi Riverfront, trails, and open spaces. The community will improve access and appearance of the bluffs on the West Side, protect existing habitat in Lilydale Park, educate the community about pollution to the natural environment, and promote more river clean-up and stream bed restoration.

#### Transportation and Infrastructure

The West Side places a priority on strong physical connections to create a seamless neighborhood from the Smith, Robert and Wabasha bridges, through District del Sol and to the city boundaries. Gateways at both the northern and southern borders should welcome people to the neighborhood and provide a sense of place. New connections should be made and old ones should be re-opened between the existing neighborhood and the flats. New bike trails should link existing trails, especially along the riverfront. Streetscape improvements should also tie District del Sol to the riverfront and downtown Saint Paul. The community seeks to build a complete, multi-modal, convenient and affordable transportation system and will work to add east-west transit connections and pedestrian and bicycle linkages, improve or construct sidewalks and curbs, and install ornamental, low-impact street lighting.

#### Commercial Corridor Revitalization

Commercial development can increase neighborhood vitality. Four strategies are recommended for creating a successful commercial corridor, including re-creating a diverse tenant base,

assisting small and minority businesses, fully utilizing city resources, and filling in market niches. New development throughout District del Sol should involve street level retail, mixed-use opportunities, and seek to increase density through infill construction and the rehabilitation of marginalized buildings. Detailed parcel testing and development schematics, pleasant streetscaping, and strong public relations and marketing efforts can further contribute to strengthening a commercial corridor. New commercial development should respect and complement existing commercial corridors.

#### Housing

The West Side supports a range of housing types, both rental and owner-occupied, that are well maintained and of high quality. Rehabilitation should always be considered as an option before demolition. A balance of housing options is critical to preserving the character of the neighborhood. A variety of affordable and market rate housing, housing for seniors which will open up single-family homes for young families, and a respect for traditional housing styles and materials are preferred. Multi-family/multi-unit housing developments should be located along major thoroughfares. The community will forge relationships between renters and landowners, provide resources for first-time home buyers, and work to prevent urban blight from becoming a pervasive problem.

# Public Safety

The West Side strives to be a community in which all residents, businesses and workers feel safe. New development should be sensitive to neighborhood safety concerns especially in areas of high density. Pedestrian and traffic safety is of major concern as is code enforcement.

# **Priority Actions for City Participation**

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or signification participation by city government. Community groups and city departments should implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for city resources in competitive processes such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working though the regular operating programs of relevant city departments.

- 1. Restore Bluff Park. The park should be cleaned up through the Saint Paul Parks Cleanup. Paths and stairways should be restored with additional redesigned historic lanterns or other appropriate directional lighting. Playground equipment should be installed, and traditional and natural landscaping should be restored. (Parks and Recreation)
- 2. Improve the accessibility and utilization of Parque Castillo by connecting the park to Concord and Robert Streets, adding facilities such as restrooms, and encouraging development which puts more "eyes" on the park. (Parks and Recreation, Planning and Economic Development)
- 3. The West Side suggests that there should be an adult-based recreation center, preferably on the West Side flats, including a track, work out facility, swimming pool and public uses related to nearby amenities such as bike paths, trails, and the river. A thorough review

- should be conducted to determine need and identification of resources to provide continual operation and maintenance. (Parks and Recreation)
- 4. Maintain Lilydale Park by protecting existing habitat, continuing to prohibit off-road mechanized uses and improving access for hiking and other non-mechanized uses.

  Opportunities for the reuse of the road to the old brickyard and completion of the off-road path for park access should be examined. (Parks and Recreation)
- 5. Develop options for and build consensus on how to improve access to, and the appearance of the bluffs on the West Side, while protecting their natural features by clearing brush and adding trash containers. Once an agreement is reached, actions should be taken to implement it. (Parks and Recreation)
- 6. Create new and improve existing stairways and paths along the bluffs while protecting natural vegetation and the integrity of the bluffline. (Parks and Recreation and Public Works)
- 7. Support the expansion of Neighborhood House Community Center and El Rio Vista Recreation Center and its available parking. (Parks and Recreation, PED)
- 8. Improve and expand pedestrian and bike connections between District del Sol and the riverfront. (Public Works, Parks and Recreation)
- 9. Improve traffic and pedestrian safety and transportation opportunities along Concord Street, connecting to the West Side Flats and downtown Saint Paul. Repave Concord Street and lay striping to include a turning lane, two driving lanes, bike lanes, and parking. Include curb bump-outs at key intersections to calm traffic and pavers at high traffic cross walks. The Concord/George/State intersection requires special attention to pedestrian safety. (Public Works)
- 10. Along with safety improvements, streetscape improvements should be implemented along District del Sol. These include developing a center median or boulevard in key areas along Concord and Robert Street, develop gateway "towers" defining entrances to the District, and reinforcing nodes at Concord/Wabasha, Concord/Robert and Concord/State with decorative paving, street furnishings, and development. (Public Works, REDA and WSCO)
- 11. Create/improve on and off-street bicycle trail connections throughout the West Side, especially to the riverfront, District del Sol, and through Lilydale Park. In District del Sol, add a bicycle lane on Concord Street (connecting to Wabasha/riverfront and Dakota County), and State Street. A bike lane along Smith Avenue to link Dodd Road and the High Bridge and a bike lane along Oakdale Street to link Riverview School, Bluff Park and Concord Street are also desired. (Public Works, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Parks and Recreation, REDA and WSCO)

- 12. Increase the amount of off-street parking that fits into the traditional neighborhood scale and context in the commercial area. The bluffline near Concord Street presents a challenge to providing ample parking for a high-density main street while avoiding the dedication of large parcels of land to parking lots. Multi-level parking structures and on-street solutions are encouraged. (Public Works, Planning and Economic Development)
- 13. Improve the poured concrete retaining wall along Concord Street; increase its height and add conduit and reinforcements as needed for the installation of street lights; widen the sidewalks to encourage pedestrian use; add traffic slowing features; add columns and decorative finishes. Rehabilitate the deteriorating green staircase which spans the bluffs from Wabasha Street to Prospect Boulevard. (Public Works)
- 14. Neighborhood-wide street and infrastructure improvements, including redesigned historic lantern lighting, new curbs and sidewalks, and safety features such as curb bumpouts where needed, are of high importance. Lighting should be consistent with City's street lighting policy. Special attention should be given to Winifred Street West, where traffic calming, improved lighting, and road reconfiguration are most needed. (Public Works)
- 15. Design and develop gateways at various entry points to the West Side. The gateways should include public art representing all West Side ethnic groups. The project should be developed with the involvement of various stakeholders, including abutting property owners. Maintenance and liability responsibilities must be identified and agreed upon prior to the construction of the projects. (Public Works, WSCO, REDA)
- 16. Connect the West Side to St. Paul District Energy Heating and Cooling and increase local use of alternative energy sources, especially in the case of the developing West Side Flats Urban Village. (Public Works, Planning and Economic Development, Saint Paul District Energy)
- 17. Support housing, commercial and office redevelopment within District del Sol, focusing on the Concord/State/George, Concord/Robert and Concord/Wabasha nodes. Support infill rehabilitation and new housing construction, including affordable and senior housing throughout the West Side. (Planning and Economic Development, REDA and NeDA)
- 18. Enhance the appearance of existing storefront façades in District del Sol with improvements that are consistent with the RCCRP's design guidelines. (Planning and Economic Development, REDA)
- 19. Secure funding for needed Cherokee Heights, Riverview, Roosevelt and Humboldt capital improvements, including a variety of media/science upgrades, kitchen/cafeteria expansion, recreational equipment additions and building code requirements. (School District, WSCO)

#### **Planning Commission Findings**

The Planning Commission finds that *the West Side Community Plan* and *the Riverview Commercial Corridor Revitalization Program* are generally consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and other adopted City policies.

# **Planning Process**

The West Side Community Plan was written by the West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO) in 1997. In 1996, a long-range planning committee was formed and began to design and facilitate a community-wide planning process. For over six months in 1997, more than 200 community members from a variety of ages, cultures and social backgrounds participated in a series of small neighborhood dialogues and a large neighborhood summit. Funding was provided by the St. Paul Foundation, the Mardag Foundation, and the Bigelow Foundation.

The Riverview Corridor Commercial Revitalization Program (RCCRP) was prepared by consultants from Hay-Dobbs for the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA), with funding through Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). A community design process for RCCRP began in April, 1999. Three "town meetings" with over 200 participants were held, and 180 questionnaires were distributed. Focus groups comprised of local business owners were also formed.

*Note: The recommendations and actions in this summary are not arranged in order of priority.*